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Repeat: Time for Hoover to Go

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A journalist can criticize the President of the United States with certain knowledge that freedom of the press will be reliable protective armor.

A newspaperman can assail the U.S. Supreme Court, outrage the Pentagon, or condemn the Central Intelligence Agency without giving a thought to the likelihood of personal reprisals and assaults.

President Nixon's press people may curse you for a while; Lyndon Johnson's social secretary may be told to strike you off the list of potential White House invitees; a Cabinet officer may suddenly cancel an appointment.

But that is as far as it goes. These men know that criticism of public officials is vital to the proper function of our government.

In this government it is only J. Edgar Hoover who is deemed beyond criticism.

It is only when someone has the temerity to suggest that in 45 years Hoover has made the FBI a fiefdom, and that he ought to make way for new leadership, that you can be sure that eunuchs will begin their war dance.

It is criticism of Hoover that sends a battalion of lackeys out to activate the character assassins who start trying to prove that anyone who speaks of Hoover as less than God is either a Communist, is "spreading the Communist line," is a "sex pervert," or is some other horrible menace.

By inspiring this kind of campaign the FBI thus proves the point of the column I wrote that stirred the raging controversy on FBI wiretaps and buggings.

That point is that when one man heads a powerful police-investigative apparatus long enough to consider it his personal kingdom, long enough to consider himself beyond the reach of the attorney general and the President of the United States, abuses of basic constitutional liberties become inevitable.

Immediately following publication of my column suggesting that it is time for Hoover to go, one of the FBI's favorite character assassins had taken the floor of the House.

Rep. John Rarick, D-La., who but for his intellectual

shortcomings might be the Joe McCarthy of this generation, was spewing forth allegations (behind the cloak of Congressional immunity) about Dr. Martin Luther King's "close association with... identified subversives" and "King's close association with known sex perverts Bayard Rustin and Ralph Abernathy."

It is the well-known FBI tactic of feeding this kind of salacious material to congressmen like Rarick that I was objecting to in my column.

Of course Rarick made a feeble effort to discredit me, coming up with that mentally and morally bankrupt old charge that "Rowan has paraphrased without apology the party line," referring, of course, to the Communist party.

Even Rarick was not so stupid or irresponsible as to try to tie me to the Communist party, so he resorted to some error-filled publication called "Biographical Dictionary of the Left" to try to prove that the columnist who dared criticize Hoover and the FBI is a leftist. One of Rarick's quotes from this dictionary shows how the logic goes:

"Throughout his several careers, Rowan has demonstrated that he is a liberal and has been recognized as such by his peers. He has received the Sidney Hillman Award for news reporting, the Contributions to American Democracy Award from Roosevelt University, the Golden Ruler Award from the Philadelphia Fellowship Commission, the Liberty Bell Award from Howard University, the Communications Award in human relations from the Anti-Defamation League, and the National Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. These tributes are almost invariably reserved for those who are actively promoting leftist-liberal causes."

Gee whiz! How subversive can a newspaperman get?

But Rarick found even his "documentation" about "Rowan the leftist" a bit confusing. The last paragraph of his quote from the "Dictionary" states:

"One curious facet of Rowan's work remains unexplained. On radio and televi-

sion and in his writings, he is a persistent and dedicated defender of the Central Intelligence Agency—so much so that it is not unreasonable to suspect that he is or has been a CIA agent."

That is typical of the logic of the character assassins.

Well, let this go "unexplained" no longer. I have never worked for CIA, do not now, and have never taken a nickel from it directly or indirectly. When I have defended CIA it was because I believe that agency does a vital job, and far more responsibly than most Americans have been led to believe.

When I have criticized the FBI it was because, although I think it does a vital job, it is now doing it more irresponsibly than most Americans realize. Its repeated use of character assassins is an example in point.

That is why I stick to my earlier assertion that it is time for J. Edgar Hoover to go.

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